

Rossbina Nathoo: FOCUS on Seniors Interview Transcript

Stories with Seniors Interview

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Note: Timestamps are estimations

00:00 Intro

Emma: Welcome to Senior Stories YYC, brought to you by Global Shapers Calgary. I'm Emma, part of a group of youthful Calgarians who are passionate about creating meaningful change in our community.

This interview is all about connecting generations. We're sitting down with amazing Calgarians who are 65 and older to hear their stories, learn from their experiences, and bridge the gap between younger and older perspectives. We'll explore how they've made an impact, the legacies they're building, and how Calgary has shaped their journeys.

We hope these stories inspire Calgarians of all ages to come together to further the good work that's been done over decades past.

Today, we welcome Rossbina Nathoo, immigrant founder and president of FOCUS on Seniors, a nonprofit dedicated to improving the holistic wellbeing of seniors of colour in Calgary's North East.

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Emma: So hello, Rossbina. Thank you so much for being here.

Rossbina: I think this is a very appropriate month to do this story sharing, because not only is it Women's International Day coming up on March 8, to celebrate women and their leadership and their contributions, but also because this would be a very good capture to be able to tell our story as Asian individuals, because May is going to be Asian heritage

month. So I think that will be quite a celebration if we are able to put all this together before then.

01:30

Emma: So if you could please share about your background, your story and your connection to Calgary.

Rossbina: So I arrived here to Canada at the age of, I would say, 15, moving on to 16. This was in the 1972. We came here as a refugee from Uganda, East Africa, when **Idi Amin**, who was the General of the Army at that time, and he wanted to call it **Black Africa**, so he ordered all the Asians to leave the country. So this is how we came about to Canada, with the help of our ex Prime Minister, Pierre Elliot Trudeau. And with his help and with our spiritual father, who was a good friend of his, who he just passed away this week, so we are all in mourning. I am from the Ismaili Muslim community, and our spiritual father that I'm referring to is His Highness, **Prince Karim Aga Khan the fourth**. So because they were friends, they were able to facilitate over 5(000)-6000 Asians to be able to leave Uganda safely and be settled in Canada. So as a teenager upon arrival, it was absolutely heartwarming to see how Canadians had received us. Because, first of all, it was October of '72.

It was a very cold month. There was a blizzard out there, minus 40. I'm not sure what it was. We came from a tropical area, yeah, where there was never an issue for us. But here we are in our tropical clothes, and we are wondering what was going to happen.

04:00

Rossbina: Anyway, the army barracks, where they led us to, we were offered so generously all the winter clothing, from coats to boots to sizes you know, to fit us for all our families. And at that point as a teenager, I told myself that **one day I would want to return this gratitude back to Canada. And it's interesting what we wish for, because these wishes do come true when there are good intentions. Because I could see my life unfolding.**

Anyhow, my passion was always about volunteering, ever since I was a young girl, so whether I was a Brownie and then a Girl Guide and then being in school, etc, but **Canada gave me many, many opportunities** to dispense my volunteering and so in this growing up years and trying to get integrated as a newcomer to Canada, it was really heartwarming to see how people welcomed you. They were curious about where we were from, because at that time, there was a lot of racism. We were being called Pakis, "go back home," those kind of attitudes. But then there were a large majority who were genuinely interested in where we were from, who we were and **because we spoke English, and I think that was our**

biggest asset at that time. And as I went into grade 12, the last four months before the semester ended and I would graduate as a grade 12 student. This is where all the education, reciprocal education occurred. So there was a lot of support from the teachers, from other students. There was quite a bit of education that went back and forth. So that led me into my first article that I wrote was my English essay at that time, and because my English teacher wanted to mark me accordingly, and my first article was called “Thanks A Million Idi Amin.”

Later on, it got published in the Vancouver Sun as an experience from a teenage eye to see what what I felt about, and it was all good, you know, so very unlike our parents or grandparents, who had gone through a lot of fear and pain, But as a teenager. No, that's not what I went through. Okay, it was all happy. Happy.

Because of this exodus, we found a new opportunity, our new home, and what a safe and welcoming place Canada was.

Now from the Montreal army barracks where we landed. We moved to Vancouver. We were given a choice where to live, and so we chose Vancouver, because I had an uncle here, and I went to school in New Westminster, and this is where all my supports started. So as a young, naive teenager, I mean, I was in awe, you know, looking at all these wonderful buildings ever—the first time we ever saw the escalator, you know, all these wonderful, beautiful things that were happening. And of course, I embraced Calgary to its fullest.

08:05

Emma: That's very nice to hear. So you mentioned that you landed in Montreal and then moved to Vancouver and then, so how did you end up in Calgary?

So fast forwarding, I got married in 1988. Oh I think I'm forgetting my dates, it's been so long ago, and yes, I had my first child at 1989 and my second one in 1991 so I'm a proud mother. First of all, of two boys, they're 34 and 35 right now, [wow], yes, and they're doing extremely well. They grew up here as Calgarians, and now they too, are contributing to society, which is nice to see, because the way they frame it is that they've got their dad's business acumen and my heart to give. So it's a nice combination.

But yes, so in my early years, again, as soon as I had my children, I volunteered within my faith based community, as I explained to you, I'm from the Ismaili Muslim community, and in our religion, this **idea of service or Seva is mandatory, and it is intrinsic in our daily**

lives. So as I volunteered within my community, I also began to empower myself with many of these transferable skills.

I did not have the opportunity, unfortunately, to attend university because my parents were going through financial hardship, and therefore I was forced to get into the workforce, but by doing so, yes, I was compromised with the education that I really wanted to take. But nonetheless, volunteering became my hands-on experience.

So I not only taught religious education classes, I volunteered at the school. I accompanied my children everywhere, so I got to know a little bit about the culture of Calgary, and **the culture of Calgary emphasizing on volunteerism** was in direct alignment with what I was doing, because I was a stay-home mom and I had all the opportunity to give of myself, my time and my knowledge to whatever I wanted to do, and of course, my **heartfelt thanks to my husband, Nadir and my in laws, who gave me the total freedom to do as I wished**, right? So although I was a stay-home mom with my children, **I used my time wisely** by volunteering for children later on, for women, and then later on, as you see me now, for seniors. So there was a time and place. Wisdom came, maturity came, and it all fell into its place.

11:40

Emma: That's lovely to hear. **How did you become involved with helping seniors in Calgary?**

So as I turned 50, I think I found my compass then, and that was in 2007 my mother was going through mental trauma, mental depression, and my father had passed away, and she was subjected to perhaps like not even being able to close her own buttons.

12:20

She was very fragile, but in her younger days, she was that role model who always volunteered, was always kind, was always giving as a person, and all of a sudden to see her in this state... **right away, I feared for myself, and I thought to myself, is this what aging is going to be for me? What will I do when I become a senior?** Who and which organization would I belong to? I knew that we had the safety net of our faith-based organization, but as I was volunteering externally, I felt this surge, this need to step up and say, "No, we are humanity and we need to give of our time and knowledge to everybody."

So in 2007, coupled by my mom's deteriorating health and with the guidance of our spiritual father, he was celebrating his golden jubilee at that time, he encouraged us to give of our time and knowledge. And so from that day on forward, I never looked back, and I

went full steam and decided that this informal volunteering that I had started in January of 2007 was worth my cause, and it was growing so fast that within three or four months, we were the talk of the quadrant of the city. People wondered skeptically as they looked at me through a suspicious lens, like, why would a person want to volunteer in the community? Who was I? Where was I going with this?

14:30

Because **overnight, I had a following of over 100 seniors**, so that was becoming a little scary for the people who were trying to monitor me at that time, and this was at the Calgary Public Library, the City of Calgary social workers, they all started to hear about this buzz as I boldly walked into the library and said, I would really like to use your lab tech, for example, to offer computer classes, and I need your space to offer English classes and arts and crafts and so on and so forth. So this was not a common thing to do. And of course, the library at that time, right away, had their walls towards me, saying that, okay, we don't have staff to do this for you. And I said, "Well, I'm not asking for staff. I will volunteer, but **I am requesting for space**, because I see this as a place of conducive learning."

And so that is when the paradigm shift took place with the support. They monitored me, they monitored my engagement with seniors, and they could see that we were thriving, and the libraries started to relax and allowed this social connections to occur, and lots more changes started to occur. You know, systemic changes occurred because now I'm learning these new words, by the way, and not realizing what kind of an impact I was making. But as I started to offer these English classes, these computer classes out of pocket, they started to wonder, where was I getting all this money from? **And the seniors were following me with such diligence and excitement they wanted more and more and more.**

16:40

And that is when, yes, the Calgary Public Library and other organizations came with conversations to me, and as I explained to hear them that I was doing it purely from my own initiative. That's when I was nominated to be the immigrants of distinction at that time. And I believe that was in – so much was happening. My gosh, I don't have my dates correct here, but maybe 2008/2009 everything was working very, very fast. At the same time, I was also nominated as the ... The immigrants of Canada nomination through the Royal Bank in Toronto at that time, so it was quite overwhelming not knowing what these awards were about, let alone trying to get into the computer and the technology system. But it's later on in the years, I realized that perhaps I should have paid little more attention at that time, because an award is a serious award, and when you get recognized for this

kind of work, which I had absolutely never foresaw, I'd never foreseen this to happen, but now I appreciate it back in retrospect.

18:10

Emma: Right, for sure. Congratulations! You mentioned that you had 100 seniors – almost overnight – supporting you alongside your mission. That's incredible. How were you able to spread the word about your volunteering, so quickly?

Rossbina: Yes, definitely word of mouth, yeah, because more seniors came to appreciate that enough was enough being at home and working hard and raising children, because they had lost a lot of time doing this, and they welcomed this opportunity to get around and be out of the house and do things differently.

18:43

Emma: It's great to hear that seniors in your community wanted to get more involved, and that you created a space for them to be. Could you walk me through a bit of the process of founding your organization; what you had in mind for seniors?

Rossbina: So within that first two years, City of Calgary decided to coach me to become a non profit organization, to seek a name for the organization, because everybody was referring to our group as Rossbina's group, or the Ismaili group, and I did not want to confuse or give that kind of message out there. So as as the City of Calgary started to coach me, they said, "Look, why don't you look for a name for your group?" And right away, I reflected inwardly, went to the root of my heart and my soul to say, what is it that am I trying to do here? This was the root of finding the purpose, planting the seed. And sure enough, I got all my guidances and my values and my ethics through my faith based organization, faith-based community, and I decided on the word "focus." FOCUS on Seniors, but I wanted focus to be an acronym, because that became my mandate over the years, that was my compass:

- F stands for fostering friendships amongst ourselves.
- O was for opportunities for personal growth and continual learning.
- C was for community involvement, so I was that role model to say that I am volunteering, and therefore the core values of this organization will be volunteering.
- U was for unity. So whether we were black, blue, brown in color, or whether we were Christian, Muslim, Jews, Hindus, Sikhs did not matter. We should all be one united Canada, one united people.
- S was selected for synergy, because I knew at that point that this was not going to be a singular ability on myself to do this. I had many of my friends, my family, my

seniors, and, of course, the collaborations that I struck with the new people that I was meeting – the library, the social workers at the City of Calgary, all the nonprofit organizations that I was becoming more and more coming into contact with them. So synergy was that, yes, this had to be done together with like-minded people to be able to expedite our vision and mission.

21:45

So what was this vision and mission that was slowly developed over the following year and the year after? **Because now I was a yes person to everything. I knew that there were good people out there in our city, in influential places**, in authoritarian places, to say, this is what you need to be; “you need to become a non-profit to safeguard your activities and your senior programs.” Not that I knew what they were talking about then, but yes, because I was a yes person, I said yes, I was willing to be open to learn and be guided and do whatever it took me to do what I needed to do.

So when it was suggested that I become a nonprofit organization, it was interestingly enough, it was at that time the social worker was Susan Brook, who now happens to be working for United Way! So it has been 18 years, and when we reflect back on what happened then and now, a lot of these pieces are now falling in its place to make a whole big picture, and it is going to continue to evolve.

So coming back to our mission and vision, it was decided that, yes, initially, the vision was for the seniors by the seniors – **we changed. Over the last few years, where I know that it's not going to be a sustainable program because of the ageism that seniors go through.** Secondly, we really value the contributions and the support from our intergenerational activity. **We need our youths. We need our young professionals.**

And the mission [is] to support our older adults and seniors to thrive in areas of social, educational, recreational and cross cultural activities, so that they can have a balanced and a holistic lifestyle, so that they can be empowered and then lead in a small way or in a large way.

24:05

Now these words were all learned during my time of volunteerism. I did not have this vocabulary when I started in 2007 but now working and being educated and being informed through my daily work. Yes, and able to articulate this a little bit better now.

So this continues where we want seniors to live active lives and to become, most importantly, contributing seniors to society.

There are many, many organizations who are also doing similar work. We may be overlapping, but each to its own, because **every organization tries to support their own ethnicity or their own ethnocultural groups, because there is a better understanding, there is more trust and relationship building when they see you leading them to the right direction**, and how they feel about it transforming. It takes a very long time for people to transform. It's not an overnight thing, but **we have seen positive results, you know, where people can now look back and say, "Can you imagine we did this. We had so much fun, we had—we danced, we did—we sang, we did arts and crafts. Where did our years go by?"** You know, so when seniors today reflect back on those beautiful last 15-16, years, when they were in their 60s and 70s, and now they're considered as non active seniors, where now they are suffering ill health, fragility and are no longer able to participate as frequently, we always value now our health, **our health, is our priority to be able to be in that mental capacity to give and the physical ability to be mobile. I think those are our treasures as seniors.**

Emma: Yeah, really help, like, preserve a quality of life, correct?

Rossbina: Yes, to maintain that quality of life, to have fun, but to have that graceful aging

Emma: Yes, yeah, that's sounds like a great mission, and that, you know, you seem to be doing really well with everything, at your organization.

Rossbina: I really appreciate everything that has happened. There's nothing I would turn the clock back for.

Emma: Awh, that's so good.

26:47

Rossbina: I turned 70 this month, and I, too, now am beginning to think, "Wait a minute. I don't have too much time." I – was I on a playground all this time? I was having so much fun, **I never took the organization seriously, because I never understood the importance of governance, the importance of actually being a non profit society and really thinking of a legacy, now. Where am I going with this, right?**

And because now, deep in my heart, I know that there is a definite need in our city, in our North East quadrant of the city, this need of FOCUS on Seniors, I am seriously now at that cross road **where I'm desperately trying to learn another threshold here** on how to become more governance oriented, you know, because **I do want to save this**

organization. That is my wish, my dying wish, that somebody will hold the beacon, a youngster will come up and say, “You know what I believed in you, and I want to do this for my age group or my generation to come.”

But not everybody has a heart to do this or the time, as you might call it, right?

28:15

Emma: Yeah. I mean, I know in the nonprofit sector in general, they always need more people, right? Always more volunteers.

Rosrbina: Definitely, volunteerism is a must. The rewards are plenty. They may not be direct, they may not be seen, but the fulfillment that you get from volunteerism is incomparable, incomparable. And there is so much learning, there is so much wisdom that comes from it, and especially when you are young, you have an opportunity to volunteer with various spectrums of life. It could be with children, could be with youths, could be with seniors. Could be with a career profession in pharmacy or dentistry or in a community organization where you are learning about politics, you know there is so much to do, and these are lifelong lessons that perhaps school or formal education does not permit you all the time.

Travel is another great opportunity where you get to see poverty, the need of people, which stirs your heart and soul, and when that awakening happens, please do not waste time. Go with intentional purpose, not like me, where I was so unaware of all this. I was having so much fun doing all this that it was never intentional that one day I would leave a legacy behind. But to see that—see this as an end vision for all youngsters, it may change. The vision may change, the passion may change as one evolves, but that's what it's all about. But to really plunge into it and take charge and say, I will do something about it. The world needs all kinds of people to do this, yeah.

Emma: It really does.

Rosrbina: Like you, what you're going to do, hopefully!

30:47

Emma: Yeah, so on that point of governance and **engaging different generations**, how does your organization already do that and like, where do you see as opportunities to continue engaging young people, whether in an organization or just in work, in volunteerism, with seniors?

Rossbina: Yes, absolutely, we are still a continued volunteer driven organization. So I work from my home, by the way, in Coral Springs. But all our external events take place at places like at the Genesis Center, at Action Dignity, at public places, you know, like it could be the church or the community centers. Lots of activity. We collaborate with different external organizations to do this.

So as we speak, just yesterday, March 1, we had our free clothing giveaway where we cannot stop doing this kind of work every time we do this, especially in the winter and the hardship we go through with storage and transportation and in the-in the November giveaway, by the way, it snowed crazy, and it was minus 27 out there, and yet, people came and took bags and bags and bags of stuff that they needed.

So it may look—it's a lot of hard work, but when you see people go with happy smiles and with so much gratitude, we know we are doing the right thing. So we were one of the first organizations that started this free clothing giveaway, one of the many programs that we do, and it is all volunteer led so seniors, friends, family of the community, will offer donations. They'll come and drop it off at my place. We then engage multi-generations, from children to moms to seniors. Whoever can come, can sort clothing out in different categories, like cultural clothing, western clothing, shoes, accessories, etc, men's clothing, and then they get transported again. We need volunteers to load the bins, offload to the venue where we are offering this kind of service and **the publicity where we engage our youths to help us create the posters and the marketing and the social media that we grew into.**

So it takes many, many, many people, I would say, to do a free clothing event, which is a three hour event. I think from start to end, it would involve at least 50-60, people. Okay,?

Emma: wow.

33:57

Rossbina: So from the time of informal volunteering, which is the donation of clothes and the sorting and the packing, to the formal type of volunteering, which is the administrative work, collaborating, writing up the documents, documenting volunteer hours because we learned the importance of building statistics, not that we do it, we will know how to do it, but hopefully we would be able to offer these statistics to somebody somewhere down the road to say, go and run with these numbers, right?

But this act of kindness is very, very important, and we continue to do that. We hold three clothing events in a year. Therefore, volunteering as an inter-generation activity is a big time, full fledged thing.

So as we volunteer formally at my office, at home, yes, we engage university students as practicum students from colleges like Bow Valley College, TIES College, ABM College, in every area of their careers. We involve young professionals who are newcomers, who need work experience. They would not know where to start. And so when they find out about our organization, when we hold our resource fair, and when we collaborate with other organizations to become visible to say, please come and volunteer for us. You know. They would want to know more about us. We would engage them. And although this is not very ludicrous [lucrative*] for us, because as soon as they find a job, they move on. But that's the whole idea. Is to empower them so that they can use our organization as their reference point. I will refer to them [them to*] organizations based on their character, their attendance and their goodwill to be able to do this.

So yes, we know that we have impacted lots and lots of lives accordingly. An inter-generation activity when it comes to sharing or documenting stories that we did over COVID, we had youngsters write biographies of seniors, yes, and the time that they spent learning about that senior, and the senior learning about the youth, was amazing. You know, it was an experience that only they can describe.

It's very rare. You know, with the Government of Canada funding the HIRE – the summer student program. **Each time we have hired a summer student, we have become lifelong friends.**

Emma: Oh, that's so lovely.

37:05

Rossbina: **And the fact that they go back with their careers or with their further education. You know, their experience is working with FOCUS on seniors without a stigma, or erasing that stigma of working with mentally ill or sick people – when they see the vibrancy in our seniors, you know, they wake up to it and say, “wow, you know what? I'd like to be like that person one day.” You know, that's exactly the inspiration we want to give our youths. And when the senior also gives that advice to them, saying, “Thank you for doing what you do. Please keep it up.” It's-it's a beautiful gift of exchange, right?**

So again, coming back to the many, many types of programs that we offer from teaching free English to our seniors, it does not take much from a young person who's got a professional day maybe, or a university student who is taking a part time course where they got one day to offer, and they could offer two hours of their time to come down and say, I will try and teach English. I will try and learn the culture of this community. Who are these people? Who are our newcomers?

Lately, we have been bombarded with so many refugees and newcomers from our war torn countries. So when we see our Central Asians, people who have come from Afghanistan, Tajikistan, where they have seen war in front of their eyes, where their children have been blown up in bombs, and when their seniors start tearing [up] all of a sudden, while they are sharing stories, get to know the people. We are probably never going to see Afghanistan, but we are going to see stories and the culture with these beautiful people.

39:30

We have had so many Syrians who have also fled from their countries, right? But they were, they were the contributors of their time in their own countries. They worked hard so that so many barriers women could, you know, they're not allowed to educate themselves. But hey, look when, when those youngsters come here from Iran, from Afghanistan, they have that craving that, the thirst for knowledge. So we as Canadians really need to hold their hand to say, "You know what? Educate yourself" because tomorrow they will be those people as to who I am. Okay, I had the advantage of English. I may not have had the advantage of any other career development, but it was volunteerism and English that brought to me where I am.

But as a professional University graduate or a diploma graduate person, imagine the power that you would have almost 10 folds by the time that person turns 40-50, they are ready to conquer the world. But for the goodness, right? For the whole world. Yeah.

40:55

Emma: That's so beautiful. What you just said, all all of that, there's so much good in people, and so much, so many experiences and life stories and, I mean, I think there's a lot of knowledge that people have, you know, without really realizing it, as you sort of reflected on with your experience of the organization, with limited education. But you know, you learn as you go, right?

Rossbina: Absolutely. You know, there's always what you call – you come across a Sour Lemon that will spoil the fruit, okay, but you know what? Just ignore that. Just dump them

aside, yeah, okay. If they cannot learn, just move on, because you cannot change every individual and these people who are the sour lemons – fortunately, they teach us more. So if we look at it in the positive way, that okay, why does a person think like that? And if we turn it around, you know, then maybe we can start seeing the good in that person instead of the disadvantage. We start seeing the opportunities, you know, instead of being ungrateful and kind, we start to feel – okay, we need to work a little more now, you know, and help this kind of attitude, right? Like, eradicate the attitude of this negative people.

42:30

Emma: For sure. So going forward, I understand that you are paying attention to governance and legacy. How do you ensure things continue? I guess, what do you see as your impact, and what support do you need?

Rosrbina: Well, in retrospect, support is very much needed, **financial support, humanitarian support, participant support**. You may have the world's greatest program crafted, but if people don't show up for it, what is the point? Right? So we have been very fortunate to always have a full class with anything that we do. So in other words, we have to listen to our audience with our heart and our ears, right? So, yes, right now, I would say that **social connections among seniors and intergeneration youth groups** is very much needed all the time, all the time, and to do innovative programs.

So focus on seniors. We have an approach of **spiral education**. So you start from low, you empower individuals gradually, okay, in different areas, in different fields, as I said in social in physical activity, emotional type of, you know, a holistic approach, and then when they come to that empowerment, where they actually step up to say, I can do that for you. Next time you know what, I will share my recipe, and I will teach you how to cook East African Palau, for example. Wow. Okay, **that is the leadership we are looking for** from informal seniors, right and and when young people and young professionals, again, spiral learning when they come to our offices, you know, again, they learn from, from the ABCs of our administrative work.

44:57

By the time, for example, this summer student would graduate, that person has gone back with so much information that it would be amazing to see that person come back few years down the road, like I've been tapped on to say, thank you. Thank you for doing this, because I found my direction. Yeah. Right? And when they come to say, Now I belong to a governance board, or I am now part of the board of directors for such and such organization, young people need to get involved in those areas, because you have formal education, right?

So I wish I had the time to go to university and learn everything about governance and law and just about finances, everything, right? But anyway, it's, it's always in a time crunch, but, we need people like that to run the organizations, and **everybody has something to give and not to be afraid**, right contribute, and this will be your learning stepping stone. As I said, the school is not going to teach you. Educational institutions are not going to teach you, but involvement will teach you right now.

46:15

Yeah, there was so much I wanted to say, but underlining all this, we need financial support. Okay to get a free room these days like we are today at the library, is of you know, a commodity. Where are we going to find free spaces to engage or to create programs? Because this costs money. At the library, it costs money for them to have spaces like this. **It costs you money to even get here, to get your equipment, right? It even cost me money to even get myself here in a car** to say that, look, yes, I will come for this interview. But these are very small things, right, that we overlook, but it builds up. So, for instance, when we have **free English classes, free with free space, with free instructors**. Yet, **what is the challenge newcomers face? They cannot afford the transportation to come here. They cannot afford the stationery**.

And when we look for free space, my goodness, **it takes a lot of trust and relationship building**. It does not happen overnight. To say, You know what, you deserve to do this on an ongoing basis. **If any community center will give us free space, it will probably be one time, but to do an ongoing program to impact? Yes, you know, we need to go on much more than this.**

48:05 *apologies - video quality decreases here, shaky camera, until end of the video

So we are all scrounging for funding. We are all competing for the same funds, and bless those people who give us the funds the first time on an ongoing basis.

And like I said, bless our governments for always feeling that social responsibility to feel that they need to support non profit organizations. But here again, the exposure for groups and non profit societies such as ourselves, who work at **grassroot levels. We work so hard, 10 times harder than the already established agencies out there**, okay, who are competing for the same amount of funding. But you know what? They are extracting volunteer hours, research time, everything that we do, to document *their* programs and they are paid salary positions with proper rent, etc, etc.

We too. We do all this work, all the ethnocultural communities do this work, and now we are raising our voice. We are becoming more vocal to say, ethnocultural communities, we deserve the piece of the pie.

49:40

So when United Way this year, for the very first time, have come up with this small funding or a medium sized funding, according to them, for \$10,000 to empower us. Grassroot empowerment Mohkinstsis program, we are able to support our programs. We feel more confident to say, You know what? They are building leadership. They are permitting us to do this for community, but at the same time they want to document our research. How many ethnocultural communities are doing, what kind of good for their institutions, and how are we going to propel the leadership to become more effective through their research. So this is going to be a give and take, a reciprocal type of funding, which is amazing to see. So thank goodness for them. You know, Calgary Foundation. Look at them. They're doing amazing work out there, you know, funding different organizations, and, of course, the Government of Canada, but we are all competing for the same funds. You know, **we cannot say that one organization deserves more than the other.** We have to think of solutions in this because each to its own we are doing our own work to propel.

51:13

And yes, the vision now of our volunteer driven organization cannot no longer be taken for granted. Volunteer hours are most superior. They offer their quality, their time, their knowledge, and therefore they need to be remunerated, maybe not as much as a professional person who would ask for \$35-\$50 an hour. But hey, show some gratitude, some reference to them. To say, here is a little gift, you know, of some kind of remuneration. You deserve this for helping us advance.

But recognition is one thing in, I guess, in an abstract way, maybe through storytelling like this, I've been very honored by the way that you are interviewing me as FOCUS on seniors, but I think that they deserve some monetary remuneration.

Emma: Well, that was great to end on. Thank you so much for interviewing with us.

Rossbina: Awh, you're welcome.